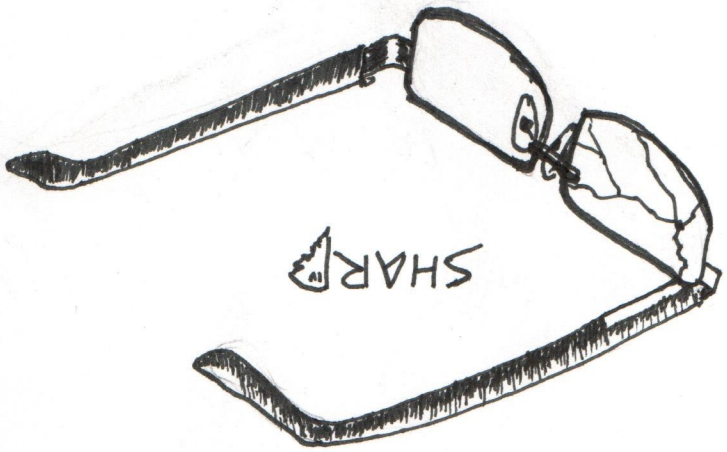

"Everything that happens is either endurable or not.

If it is endurable, then endure it.

Stop complaining.

If it is not endurable, then stop complaining.

Your destruction will mean its end as well."

-Marcus Aurelius

Thomas Vose CC-SY-NC

An Apology for Philosophy.

So as a dumbass student, I was one of the first to shit on philosophy as a field of study. I thought of it as pointless navel-gazing that made you unemployable, abstract bullshit with no relevance to day-to-day life. It makes me wince now. As I get older, I see more how the lack of it has caused so many negative currents to fill the vacuum.

Logic and rhetoric, the left and right hands of philosophy, used to be the basis of education, and now they've basically vanished from the curriculum. Without these we lose such skills as thinking critically, developing cogent and constructive arguments, and maintaining a level of intellectual humility in the face of what can be known - and we're easy marks, to boot. And ethics, of course, is either (hopefully) picked up at home or not at all in any substantive way.

Schools love their STEM, but divorced from philosophy it creates scientific achievements all too often for the sake of short-term gain, with little or no concern about their impact on the environment, on society, and on our quality of life. We're not taught to think, we're taught to react - and our public policies bear that out.

Philosophy gives us the potential to discover answers that make sense to us, things that keep us happy and fulfilled - it gives clarity to the values you're willing to stand for. It helps us understand why things are the way they are. It protects us from being taken advantage of. These are things we should be learning as early as possible.

So yeah, I was wrong. Life is more than breathing. One of the oldest quotes in the field holds true - "the unexamined life is not worth living."

All too often, grilled hamburgers end up looking like this:

with a puffed-up middle that doesn't always cook properly and gets in the way for toppings.

Indenting the middle before cooking, either with the back of a spoon or your thumb, counteracts this:

resulting in a much more even finished product.

There is a bird on the flag of Zimbabwe. It represents a connection to the Great Zimbabwe civilization of the Shona people that existed between 1100 and 1500 in the area - it dominated the trade of that part of the continent.

The ruins of the capital city can still be seen to this day as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Eight stone birds were found there and promptly looted, sold to European museums and private collectors. All but one have been returned

What is the biggest number? After all, you can add one to anything and get a bigger number - basically forever.

How about TREE(3)?

Imagine a game where "seeds" of colored dots are connected to make "trees":

There are two rules:

1. The first tree must contain no more than one seed, the second no more than two, the third no more than three, etc.
2. When you make a tree that a previous tree could be contained within, the game ends and that number of trees is your result.

TREE(1) (1 color) = 1

TREE(2) (2 colors) = 3

With three colors of "seeds", TREE(3) is a definite, finite number, but so big it would be impossible to reach in the lifetime of the universe, and the proof would take up more space than exists.

And you could still keep going...

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Virtually all of our math is base-10 - why are clocks and time in 60s and 12s?

Blame the ancients.

The Sumerians used base 60 counting and the Egyptians used base 12 - the former split up the hour and the latter created the 24-hour day - the Greeks saw these and carried them to us as part of their legacy.

The French tried to make decimal time a thing in the Revolution -
10 hour days
100 minutes/hour
100 seconds/minute.
It didn't take...

During the early days of COVID, some restaurants put their recipes online so people could enjoy their food at home. Olive Gardea was one, and put up their alfredo recipe- it's gone now, but we copied it, as it's one of my favorite things...

Olive Gardea Alfredo Sauce:

- 3 oz. butter
- 1 tbsp. garlic
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 1 ½ cup whole milk
- 1 ½ cup cream
- 1 cup Parmesan/Romano blend
- Salt & pepper to taste

Combine in saucepan over medium-low heat.

This is a "duck's foot pistol."

You'll never guess why it's called that.

Since firearms at the time weren't terribly accurate, this setup pretty much guaranteed you'd hit something in front of you.

They were popular around the time of the French Revolution and Napoleon. Must have been a bitch to load, though.

Each one also came with this snazzy budge →

to the country. (Fuck you, Cecil Rhodes)

It is said that peace will never return to Zimbabwe until all of them have returned.

Great Zimbabwe is the largest of the ruins found throughout the area and was a symbol of regional power- but for a long time many European historians tried to push a narrative that African people couldn't have made something so advanced- a racist viewpoint that has been thoroughly discredited.

"King John the Dipshit"
Well, they never got quite there, but here are some monarchs who came close)

- Justinian II "The Slit-Nosed" (c.668-711) of the Tyrannites
- Ethelred II "The Unready" (966-1016) of England
- Henry IV "The Impotent" (1425-1474) of Castile
- Ivar "The Boneless" (?-873) of the Vikings
- Ivaylo "The Cabbage" (?-1281) of Bulgaria
- Charles III "The Simple" (879-929) of West Francia
- Louis X "The Quarrelsome" (1289-1316) of France
- Eric XI "The Lisp and Lame" (1216-1250) of Sweden
- Svjatopolk I "The Accursed" (980-1019) of Kyiv

"Children not of the Father but of the Land"

YOU SHOULD READ:

Well, maybe. It's pretty old now - published in 1975, with volume 3 coming out in 1981. Testware this and The Book of Lists by the same team, though, I was basically launched as a nonfiction reader, librarian, and (for good and bad) intellectual dilettante. Every used bookstore had it for the longest time. The Earth's were fun reads, and occasionally wildly inappropriate for an impressionable elementary-age kid, but hey.

The "Uncle John's Bathroom Reader" series captures a bit of the Almanac's magic, but it screams for a true successor.

THE FIVE CANONS OF RHETORIC (by Cicero!)

(How to put together a speech fancy-style)

I - Invention - Brainstorm the points you want to make.

II - Arrangement - Figure out the order that works best for them.

III - Style - What fancy / clever language do you want to use to convey them?

IV - Memorization - get it in your head.

V - Delivery - Get it out there, and don't forget about your body language.

(Being Mr. Cleverpants Speaker did cause Cicero some problems, though...)